

division of public housing &
rental assistance



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Section 8: Family Self-Sufficiency

Fact Sheet

The Section 8 Family Self Sufficiency Program (FSS) is designed to enable families to achieve economic independence and self-sufficiency. By linking Section 8/Housing Choice Voucher Program (HCVP) tenant-based vouchers with the help of both private and public resources, families are able to receive job training, educational services and other much needed assistance over a five year period. The goal is to eliminate the clients' need for public assistance.

DHCD's Division of Public Housing and Rental Assistance, which administers this program, has the responsibility for regulatory and administrative oversight of all state and federally-aided rental assistance programs which address the needs of low- and moderate-income families, the elderly and persons with disabilities.

How it works

The purpose of the program is to coordinate the use of Section 8/HCVP rental assistance with public and private resources in order to assist eligible families achieve economic independence and self-sufficiency. Public housing agencies work with the public and private sectors to put together a workforce enhancement program where the participating Section 8 recipients can receive necessary training and counseling, such as skill building, job training, and educational opportunities, and be referred to other ancillary supports such as child care and transportation providers.

A five year "Contract of Family Participation" is tailored for each participant. This contract outlines the participant's goals and describes the various work-related activities in which the participant agrees to participate. The participant is allowed to modify their goals as they gain more perspective on their future and gain more work experience.

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As the participant’s income and rent share increases, an escrow account is established by the public housing agency in order to set aside funds for the participant at the end of the program. Upon successful completion of the program, the participant can use these funds for any purpose, such as homeownership, starting a business, paying off loans, or going back to school. The participant is also able to access their escrow funds during the five year contract term as long as it is for work-related purposed, such as paying car insurance, buying a uniform or enrolling in a job-related course. Generally, midterm use of the escrow is limited, in order to ensure that funds are available for the participant when they have completed the program. The escrow funds are available to those participants who are employed and no longer have a need for public assistance. However, successful FSS graduates are still eligible to receive housing assistance.

Who is eligible

Current Section 8/HCVP program participants in good standing.

Application process

Each DHCD Section 8 contractor routinely markets its Family Self Sufficiency program to current program participants. All participants are eligible to participate, provided they agree to sign a five year Contract of Family Participation. This contract outlines the various activities which the participant needs to complete in order to develop the skills, education and training necessary to secure and sustain employment. The participant takes an active role in the design and future modification of their plan.

For further information

Please contact either the local housing authority in a community of your choice, or contact the Bureau of Federal Rental Assistance at (617) 727-7130.